

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 WELLINGTON 000692

SIPDIS

NOFORN

STATE FOR D (FRITZ), EAP/ANP, EAP/RSP, EAP/EP, INR/EAP  
NSC FOR VICTOR CHA AND MICHAEL GREEN  
SECDEF FOR OSD/ISA LIZ PHU  
PACOM FOR J2/J233/J5/SJFHQ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/09/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NZ](#)

SUBJECT: THOUGH ON THE FRINGE, NEW ZEALAND'S GREENS MAY  
PLAY ROLE IN NEXT GOVERNMENT

REF: WELLINGTON 70

Classified By: Charge D'Affaires David R. Burnett,  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

-----  
Summary  
-----

1. (C) Strongly identified with environmental protectionism, New Zealand's Green Party also represents a number of other small constituencies, ranging from those who favor legalizing marijuana to those concerned with improving nutrition in school lunches. Typically favored by younger New Zealanders and women, the Greens lost support early in this campaign when they tried to attract a broader range of supporters by campaigning for "social justice.". The Party only regained the 5% threshold in the polls after its leaders pledged to back a coalition with Labour and PM Clark made a show of campaigning with Green co-leader Jeanette Fitzsimons (latest polls put it as high as 7%). Labour's decision to back the Greens assures it a needed coalition partner - it can't win without at least one -- but also risks painting the Government as more radical than it has tried to appear thus far. It may also have limited the Government's coalition options with United Future, though a Parliamentary voting arrangement may still be possible. A Labour-Green coalition may slow, but will not rule out, our pursuit of a more structured relationship with a reelected Labour Government. PM Clark is very unlikely to give the Greens a major foreign policy and security role. She will also keep them well away from intelligence issues. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Over the last 30 years, the Green movement has so influenced New Zealand that environmental themes now are imbedded in the New Zealand identity and are favored by major and minority parties alike. Much of the public nevertheless views the political wing of the Green movement, the Green Party, with suspicion. They find the party's policies too extreme and unwieldy, and there is something about the "eat your vegetables - NOW" quality about Green pronouncements that many find unpalatable. The Greens' 1999-02 involvement in government resulted in a mixed report card.

Core themes bind Green constituencies  
-----

3. (SBU) Nonetheless, the party has strong support from its core constituents, an assortment of smaller interests each defending causes central to the Greens' political beliefs: environmentalism and conservation, safe food (including no genetic modification), youth, left-wing economics, legalization of cannabis, nonviolence and peace. The Greens say they want a "fairer society," including government assistance to children and the poor. They led parliamentary protests against U.S. and coalition military operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq. The Greens set a very low yardstick for identifying human rights abuse, which they often use in making their case for fair trade.

4. (SBU) The Greens favor the use of government regulation to change people's behavior. They view the market and its instruments with suspicion. The Greens therefore are not favored by an emerging strain of environmentally-oriented voters who remain convinced about the need to address pollution, biodiversity and climate change and other areas of Green concern, yet are increasingly uncertain about alarmist proclamations and the use of heavy handed rules.

5. (SBU) In fact, some voters see the Greens' unrelenting stance on its pet issues as perilously close to extremism. That perception, and the view that the party is increasingly out of touch with the electorate, has stymied its attempts at broader appeal. Last year, for example, the Anarchist movement declared Greens co-leader Rod McDonald an enemy of the poor when he called on New Zealanders to stop buying fuel-inefficient, used cars from Japan.

16. (C) Many Kiwis nevertheless admire Fitzsimons' deliberate lack of spin: her straight- shooting approach has won her points in leadership debates and on the campaign trail. She has learned from the last election campaign, when she appeared angry most of the time.

#### On-and-off relationship with Labour

17. (SBU) In the 1999-02 Labour Government, the Greens worked in cooperation with the Labour-led Governing coalition on certain issues, in return for limited budget input. Three years ago, the Greens -- mistakenly believing that Labour would require their support to form a government -- took an intransigent line against genetic modification that ended up costing both itself and Labour votes. United Future picked up Green-fearing votes and became Labour's choice as its primary partner in a coalition government. The Greens managed to increase their strength in Parliament and agreed to support the Government on certain issues, however.

18. (SBU) In this year's campaign, the Greens have publicly and unequivocally declared Labour is the only party with which they will enter into a post-election arrangement. Even before NZ First leader Winston Peters announced he would avoid a formal coalition with either major party, Labour decided its best prospect would be to back a coalition with the Greens, the only minor party other than NZ First likely to gain at least 5% of the party vote. In an apparent effort to ensure that the Greens finish above the threshold (they have little chance of winning a constituency seat), Labour has endorsed a coalition with the Greens and the PM has on occasion hit the campaign trail with Green Party co-leader Jeanette Fitzsimons. This has likely limited the possibility of a formal coalition arrangement with the more centrist United Future, whose leader Peter Dunne has openly ruled out any role in a Government that formally includes the Greens. Labour may have to settle for a more complicated voting agreement with Dunne instead.

#### Leveraging influence in a new Labour government

19. (SBU) If Labour wins a third term and turns to the Greens as its main coalition partner for a majority hold on government, the Green leadership likely would insist on cabinet posts or at least a support agreement that delivers much more than their 1999 and 2002 arrangements. Recent media reports suggest that the party is interested in running the transportation portfolio. This interest has caused concern among other parties, which contend that the Greens' policy of increasing tax on diesel fuel would raise freight charges and Green opposition to developing over-burdened road networks would hurt the country's regional economies. Actually, because the Greens have already made it clear they will not work for National, and because National wouldn't want to work with them in any case, their negotiating position is likely to be limited and they may be assigned a relatively minor cabinet slot.

#### Foreign policy: can't see the forest for the trees

10. (SBU) In July, before announcing itself in coalition with Labour, the Greens attempted to force the Government to stop the national cricket team from departing for a tour of Zimbabwe. They brought to New Zealand a prominent Zimbabwean activist who spoke against the Mugabe regime's extremist domestic policies. Last month, trying to fuel debate over the National Party's foreign policy, the Greens brought to New Zealand a former Australian intelligence official who quit his job in opposition to the Iraq war. Andrew Wilkie, the former Australian Defence Force lieutenant colonel, told an audience of Kiwis that the New Zealand government's opposition to the invasion of Iraq and the country's anti-nuclear policy keep New Zealand off the list of top terrorist targets.

11. (C) Neither visitor produced significant political gains for the Greens: the Wilkie visit barely registered in the media and Labour grabbed most of the airtime on the cricket issue. Both visits demonstrate the Greens' approach to foreign affairs: specific issues reflective of their ideology, rather than a unifying, concrete foreign policy vision. Labour MPs have quietly told us they regard the Green's foreign affairs spokesman, Keith Locke, as extreme and impractical. The Greens have also in the past embarrassed Labour by criticizing the Government's trade talks and other approaches to China. In coalition, it is very unlikely PM Clark would allow the Greens any real foreign policy or security role, and their lack of negotiating leverage will prevent them from insisting on one. In her role as Minister in Charge of the NZ Intelligence Service, Clark has kept a tight control on intelligence issues, allowing few even within her cabinet to see reports. She will undoubtedly keep any Green cabinet official in the

dark about intelligence matters.

#### Political Management

12. Unlike other minor parties, the Greens' strength resides in the commitment to the cause rather than the profile of any one leader. The party strives to make decisions by consensus, and this is reflected in its co-leadership arrangement with Jeannette Fitzsimons and Rod Donald at the helm. One way of explaining how this leadership arrangement functions is to think of the party as, ironically, a corporation. Fitzsimons' role is akin to chairman of the board - the public face of the party and movement. Donald is more like a managing director - overseeing the day-to-day operations at Parliament. The Embassy has in recent months sought to build bridges with the Greens in order to better explain our policies to them, and Donald in particular has responded warmly to these efforts.

13. Jeanette Fitzsimons has the leadership's strongest environmental roots. Despite having no formal training or background in any field of science, Fitzsimons was a lecturer in environmental studies at Auckland University before being elected to Parliament. She also worked as an environmental consultant and was highly active in various environmental organizations. Fitzsimons' first entry into politics was as an unsuccessful candidate of the Values Party, the Greens' political forbearer. When that party merged with a number of other groups to form the modern Green Party, Fitzsimons became an active member of the new organization. When the Green Party joined with several other left-wing parties to form the Alliance, Fitzsimons became co-deputy. In 1995, she became co-leader of the Green Party (which remained within the Alliance). In the 1996 election, Fitzsimons entered Parliament on the Alliance list. The Greens contested the 1999 election as an independent party, with Fitzsimons and Rod Donald at the helm. Fitzsimons and her husband manage an organic farm.

14. Rod Donald is a longstanding environmentalist who belonged to the Values Party from 1974 to 1979. He was first elected to Parliament in the 1996 election as an Alliance list MP. In 1999, he won election as number two on the Greens' party list. He retained his seat in the 2002 election. For many years, Donald has had a special interest in electoral reform. From 1989 to 1993, he served as spokesperson for the Electoral Reform Coalition, the campaign that led to the introduction of MMP.  
Burnett